



**For the Environment Committee
Testimony of Alicea Charamut, Executive Director
March 6, 2020**

Rivers Alliance was formed to fight for sound water policies at the state and federal levels, to provide education on water resources, and to advocate for any person or group striving to protect water. If you want clean, free-flowing and healthy rivers, and high-quality drinking water, Rivers Alliance is here to help.

HB 5340 AAC THE MODERNIZATION OF THE CONNECTICUT BOTTLE REDEMPTION PROGRAM – Support

Thank you for proposing this much needed expansion and modernization of Connecticut's bottle redemption program.

Connecticut's Bottle Bill is long overdue for modernization by expanding to juice, tea, sports drink, and energy drink containers; an increase to a 10 cent deposit; and a much needed increase in the handling fee.

Recycling rates for bottles & cans are more than twice as high in states with container deposits than in states without them. The states with the strongest, most comprehensive bottle deposit laws on the books have the highest recycling rates of all. Expansion and a ten cent increase will strengthen our bottle bill and increase recycling rates as well as provide cleaner recyclable materials.

The cost of doing business and providing services has increased since the Bottle Bill was first enacted nearly four decades ago. The handling fee must be increased so that dealers and redemption centers can perform their responsibilities under the law. The handling fee increases proposed in HB 5340 are reasonable and brings the fee in line with fees in surrounding states.

Rivers Alliance is in strong support of our bottle bill and its modernization because it helps keep beverage containers out of our rivers and streams and, in turn, does not contribute to the mass of floating plastic in our oceans. A container carelessly discarded by a thoughtless person is worth something to someone else. For that reason, we ask that you also consider including wine and liquor bottles (which should include 50 ml nip containers aka airplane bottles). Because liquor bottles and 50 ml nip containers are not covered under the bottle bill, they are commonly found in our streets and alongside rivers. Having helped to coordinate New England's largest river cleanup for the Connecticut River Conservancy for 4 years I can personally attest to this.

Thank you again for introducing a bill that modernizes our bottle bill and we encourage the committee to pass this bill and consider the addition of wine and liquor bottles.

SB 292 AAC ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS AND PESTICIDE REGULATION IN THE STATE – Support

A citizen's ability to protect themselves and their environment from harm is limited by the availability of information. The Connecticut Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) 2017 report "*Environmental Enforcement in Connecticut, Part 1: Pesticides*" highlights that DEEP's current system of mountains of paper documents in filing cabinets is a barrier to the average citizen's (or even a staffed organization's) ability to determine if they are adequately protected from misapplication or over-application of pesticides. Making information available online is an essential first step.

CEQ's report also points out that the fee revenue generated by DEEP from the pesticide program is approximately \$3,000,000. One of the recommendations in the report is that DEEP receives dedicated funds from that revenue to enhance enforcement and transparency. This was proposed in HB 5999 last year which was passed by this committee, as well as, the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee.

Please pass this bill and consider including CEQ's recommendations as stated in its 2017 report.

SB 297 AAC THE USE OF PERFLUOROALKYL OR POLYFLUOROALKYL SUBSTANCES IN CLASS B FIREFIGHTING FOAM – Support

Thank you for taking strong and timely action on the dangers that perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl (commonly known collectively as PFAS) substances present to our environmental and public health.

Aqueous firefighting foam (AFFF) contains PFAS which are a suite of chemicals used in many materials that are part of our everyday life. These chemicals, when released in high concentrations to the environment, have been linked to immune system disorders, cancer, and thyroid disruption in humans. They remain in the body of humans and animals for long periods and build up over time.

On Sunday, June 9th, DEEP issued a public advisory to avoid foam found in the Farmington River in Windsor. A fire suppression system malfunction at a Bradley International Airport hangar resulted in the release of a large volume of AFFF (Aqueous Film Forming Foam), a common firefighting agent, much of which was directed to floor drains in or near the hangar. Through the drains, the AFFF made its way through to the sanitary sewer system at the Poquonock Wastewater Treatment Facility which discharges treated wastewater to the Farmington River. The release of this material to one of New England's most popular and widely visited rivers is more than an unfortunate incident and a wake-up call for the public about the dangers of AFFF to our precious and finite water.

The work of our first responders and the rigorous training they undergo on a regular basis to keep us safe and save lives is very much appreciated. Their work will be much easier if they are provided with an effective alternative to AFFF that contains PFAS chemicals.

Additionally, this must be accomplished in conjunction with an effective take-back program of AFFF containing PFAS. Ground and surface waters are not only contaminated through release

during an emergency response, but often through leaks when stored or accidental releases like we saw in June at Bradley.

We strongly urge you to pass this bill and thank you again for acting to protect the water that is so vital to our health and quality of life here in Connecticut.

SB 299 AAC THE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE-USE PLASTIC STRAWS – Support

Several years ago, my friend Leah – then nine years old – volunteered for the Connecticut River Conservancy’s Source to Sea Cleanup at Wethersfield Cove. She found so many straws it made her extremely angry (I’m not exaggerating). She resolved to give up plastic straws and earnestly followed through on this resolution. She further shamed her family into giving up plastic straws and persuaded her Girl Scout Troop to study the problem of plastic pollution for their Mall Madness project that same year.

People like Leah who have witnessed the extent of litter in the form of single-use plastics which cannot be easily recycled know that the time to pass laws to reduce single-use plastics is now. Not only do they contribute to plastic pollution in our waterways and oceans, but they are an unnecessary burden on our municipal and state solid waste programs that are currently under stress.

This bill is not a full ban on plastic straws. This is bill that would ensure that the Leahs of the world do not end up with straws forced upon them by full-service eating establishments. One can’t give back a straw that has already been placed in a drink or if the wrapper has been soiled after being placed on a dining table. These straws will get thrown away which is exactly what Leah has made a personal choice to avoid.

This bill will not prevent anyone who needs or wants a straw from getting a straw in a full-service restaurant. Please allow those of us who choose not use plastic straws make that choice for ourselves. Please pass this bill.

SB 301 AAC THE USE OF CHLORPYRIFOS – Support

Thank you for this proposed legislation to create a phase out of the use of the insecticide chlorpyrifos that will keep Connecticut at the forefront of states that take action to protect its citizens and environment.

Chlorpyrifos is a **highly toxic pesticide** (a substance used to kill, repel or control pests) derived from a nerve gas that has been banned from indoor use since 2001. An EPA review of this chemical found that it is dangerous, but the federal government has not acted on a ban in spite of scientific evidence. Chlorpyrifos is a particular threat to children as their developing brains are susceptible to neurotoxic effects. Yet this chemical is applied in our communities on golf courses, and for agricultural uses. In our population dense state, these properties are often surrounded by residences. Our families are at risk.

We urge you to carefully consider the very detailed information provided to you by Beyond Pesticides, and in a fact sheet provided by Tara Cook-Littman as to the dangers of this chemical. Please pass this bill.